United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

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DH/1043
20 December 1991

F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- Secretary-General predicts further delay in implementation of United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; consultations with parties on technical difficulties necessary.

- Secretary-General says El Salvador negotiations are moving quickly. Parties try to push strongly for moves while Javier Pérez de Cuéllar is still in office.

- Secretary-General is disappointed that Cyprus question remains unresolved after sixteen years of personal involvement; calls on leaders of two communities to reach "long overdue" solution.

- Farewell statement of Secretary-General to staff of United Nations.

- Administrative and Budgetary Committee approves appropriations totalling $2.4 billion for proposed 1992-1993 programme budget.

- FAO Director-General, in year-end message, warns that drop in 1991 harvest threatens global food supplies.

- Trusteeship Council to send fact-finding mission to Palau.

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"A further delay of some months" in the implementation of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is likely, according to Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. He says consultations continue with the parties on differences in the interpretation of the settlement plan for the Territory.

In his report to the Security Council, dated 19 December, the Secretary-General said the issues at hand included the identification of those eligible to vote, the confinement of troops, and the return of refugees and other Saharans living outside the Territory. As was well known, he said, a number of persons who claimed to belong to Western Sahara had been moved into the Territory. The Secretary-General called for the utmost restraint at this

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moment to ensure that the implementation of the plan was not jeopardized by such actions.

In a separate report to the General Assembly on the financing of MINURSO, dated 16 December, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar stated that some $58 million had been received so far from United Nations member countries with another $83 million still outstanding in assessed contributions.

With regard to the question of repatriation of refugees organized under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, enough contributions had been received for the repatriation process to begin, the Secretary-General reported.

The Security Council was holding consultations this afternoon on the question of Western Sahara. A formal meeting of the Council was scheduled to follow consultations this evening.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said this morning that the parties in the El Salvador negotiations currently underway in New York were moving "very, very quickly, with great enthusiasm".

His Personal Representative for Central America, Alvaro de Soto, echoed that view saying that the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) were "trying to push very strongly" for moving ahead while the present Secretary-General was still in office.

According to Mr. de Soto, the parties are currently discussing the national civil police, to be created following dissolution of existing security bodies; reduction of armed forces; economic, social and agrarian issues; and political participation by members of the FMLN in the political arena of El Salvador once the cease-fire begins.

In a separate development, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar was asked by correspondents this morning about the recovering of the bodies of two Americans in Lebanon. He said that he expected the bodies to be returned today or tomorrow and that his efforts had mainly concerned Colonel Higgins, a United Nations peace-keeping officer, as well as other bodies of persons from different nationalities.

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The Secretary-General has expressed disappointment by the fact that the Cyprus question, with which he has been personally involved since 1975, has not been resolved. At the same time, he remains encouraged by the conviction that the Turkish and Greek communities in the island will inevitably recognize that a mutually acceptable solution is in their respective self-interest.

The statement was contained in his report to the Security Council, dated 19 December, in which he commended the Council for remaining determined that a

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just and lasting solution should be achieved in Cyprus. The negotiations on a high-level international meeting, which had been postponed because of the change of Government in Turkey, must resume promptly in the new year, he said.

It was important that both sides focus on the establishment of a federal republic. A solution was within reach if all concerned were willing to make their contribution to a compromise solution which would safeguard the legitimate interests and concerns of both communities, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar stated.

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The Secretary-General today said farewell to the staff of the United Nations.

In an address to staff gathered in the General Assembly Hall, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar reflected on the role of the United Nations under his leadership, noting that international peace-keeping had gained new dimensions of peace-making and peace-building. "Our responsibilities are still growing" as the Organization prepares to carry out central roles in the cause of peace in Cambodia, El Salvador, Western Sahara and possibly Angola and Yugoslavia, he said.

Massive staff cuts and reorganizations had resulted in a deterioration of conditions of service, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said, adding that one of his deepest regrets was that the Organization remained in a precarious financial situation despite his efforts.

The Secretary-General believed that even more complex and demanding challenges lay ahead for the Organization. Those challenges, he pointed out, would require a major reappraisal of the way "the house is run". In spite of a positive new era in international relations, the future of the United Nations was by no means clear. Recent global political changes had exposed basic realities including conflict, the actualities of ethnic strife, gross political and economic inequalities, disregard for human rights and environmental threats to the planet.

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Appropriations totalling nearly $2.4 billion were approved for the biennium 1992-1993 this afternoon by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), which recommended that the Assembly appropriate $2,402,578,800 for expenditures and approve income estimates of some 450 million. Total net requirements would be some $2 billion.

The Committee took that action, without a vote, by approving four draft resolutions contained in its report to the General Assembly.

Under the texts, the Assembly would resolve to approve budget appropriations of some $1.2 billion for the year 1992. It would authorize the Secretary-General, with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee on

Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), to enter into commitments to meet unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. A Working Capital Fund would be established at $100 million, from which the Secretary-General would be authorized to make certain advances. Should those provisions prove inadequate, he would be authorized to utilize cash from special funds and accounts in his custody, or the proceeds of loans authorized by the Assembly.

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Global food supplies will be fragile in 1992, despite last year's record grain harvest, according to the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Edouard Saouma, in his year-end message on the state of world food and agriculture.

For the first time in eight years, world food production declined by some 1.4 per cent in 1991, due to drought, wars and disruption of production and marketing systems combined. Mr. Saouma warned of growing famine in the Horn of Africa and severe food shortages in parts of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In Iraq, the FAO Director-General cited grave food shortages, food prices 15 to 20 times higher than pre-war levels, serious cases of malnutrition and an increasing number of child deaths.

As 1991 comes to a close, he said, some 500 million people in the world were underfed and 24 nations were experiencing food shortages. The world would enter 1992 once again consuming more than it produces -- food security next year would depend to a large extent on the success or failure of the 1992 harvests.

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The Trusteeship Council has decided to dispatch a visiting Mission to Palau in March to observe conditions in the Territory. Palau is the last portion of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands still under United States administration.

The Council decided during a special session that the two-week visiting mission should be composed of four of its members (China, France, Soviet Union and United Kingdom) and two representatives of the countries of the region. The Council directed the mission to receive petitions, some of which might be examined on the spot, and to submit a report on the visit as soon as practicable.

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Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

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DH/1044
23 December 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Body of Lieutenant-Colonel William Higgins identified and handed over to United States Embassy in Lebanon.

- Security Council calls for further study of materials and supplies needed for essential civilian and humanitarian aid to Iraq.

- General Assembly President calls attention to "landmark accomplishments" in statement suspending forty-sixth session; Assembly authorizes $2.4 billion in appropriations for 1992-1993 and calls for global moratorium on "drift-net" fishing, among other things, before concluding its work.

- Secretary-General to send small team of experts and support staff to Luanda to prepare for United Nations mission to observe elections in Angola; appeals for $167.4 million for humanitarian assistance.

- United Nations delegation observes opening of first plenary session of Convention for Democratic South Africa in Johannesburg.

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The Secretary-General has been informed by his Special Envoy Giandomenico Picco that the body of Lieutenant-Colonel William Higgins had been identified at the American University Hospital in Beirut and had been handed over to the United States Embassy in Lebanon.

In a statement through his Spokesman today, he said that with this development "a dark chapter in the history of the United Nations peace-keeping had been closed". He said he wished to express to Colonel Higgins' widow and to his family his heartfelt condolences on this sad occasion.

Colonel Higgins was serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon at the time of his abduction on 17 February 1988. His captors announced his execution on 31 July 1989.

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Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said he would continue his efforts with determination to bring about the release of the remaining hostages and those detained without due process of law, notably Sheik Obeid and the Lebanese detained in southern Lebanon and Israel, as well as the return of the Israeli servicemen missing in action. He said he deeply regretted the brief abduction of three Lebanese in southern Lebanon last Friday which already had had a negative effect on his efforts.

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The Security Council has called for further study of the materials and supplies needed for essential civilian and humanitarian aid to Iraq with a view to alleviating the humanitarian conditions for the civilian population.

The Council President, Yuliy Vorontsov (Soviet Union) made the announcement Friday evening following consultations of the Council on the subject.

In his statement, the President said the Council had also decided to request the Secretary-General to prepare a report on Iraq's compliance with resolution 687 (1991), setting the conditions for the cease-fire in the Persian Gulf conflict, and subsequent relevant resolutions, which will be taken up by the Council at its next review session. Mr. Vorontsov pointed out that the Council had noted that Iraq has not yet used the possibility for oil sales as permitted by resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991) to finance its humanitarian relief needs.

In a separate development, the Council held consultations throughout the day on the situation in Western Sahara and in Cyprus.

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The President of the General Assembly, Samir S. Shihabi (Saudi Arabia), on Friday, 20 December, suspended the forty-sixth session calling attention to some of the "landmark accomplishments" of the session. Those included the institutionalization of the Office of the President of the Assembly; the strengthening of the humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations; and efforts towards the restructuring of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

Pointing to the number of resolutions adopted during the present session, Mr. Shihabi said the body had been able to achieve "mergers where possible, consensus where desirable and reductions where practicable". He also noted that "constructive deliberations at a time when the world was witnessing the heralding of a new and more positive era in international relations" had confirmed the effective role of the United Nations and the centrality of the General Assembly.

Before concluding its work, the Assembly adopted a programme budget for the United Nations, authorizing some $2.4 billion dollars for the biennium 1992-1993, and over $2.5 billion for expenditures.

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In other action, the Assembly called upon the international community to implement a global moratorium on all large-scale pelagic high seas drift-net fishing by 31 December 1992, on the recommendation of its Economic and Financial Committee; deplored the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; and called for the immediate lifting of Israeli restrictions and obstacles hindering the implementation of assistance by the United Nations and others to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

By a text on the consequences of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, the Assembly urgently appealed to Member States, organizations, scientific bodies and individuals to provide assistance for the study and mitigation of the environmental deterioration of the region. By another text it urged Member States to protect the human rights and dignity of persons infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), people with AIDS and members of particular population groups, and to avoid discriminatory action against them.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has initiated preparations for the sending of a small team of experts and support staff to Luanda, Angola, for United Nations technical assistance for upcoming elections in that country.

On Friday, 20 December, he informed the Security Council of his intentions to recommend that the Council authorize a United Nations mission to monitor elections in the country.

The Secretary-General is responding to a request by Angola for the sending of United Nations observers who will follow the electoral procedure until its completion in the fall of 1992.

In a statement issued through his Spokesman, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said that internationally supervised elections constituted the central element in the implementation of the Angola Peace Accords. The monitoring should cover the entire electoral process, including voter registration, he said.

In related news, the Secretary-General has appealed for about $167.5 million for urgent humanitarian assistance to Angola. The assessment identifies target groups of refugees and returnees, internally displaced persons, abandoned children, and demobilized soldiers totalling 1.4 million people who need urgent food and non-food assistance to survive and to return to normal, productive lives.

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The United Nations was invited to observe the opening of the first plenary session of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa in Johannesburg over the weekend.

The United Nations delegation was headed by Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari of Nigeria, the Chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Committee; the Secretary-General's

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Personal Representative, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); as well as Mr. Sotirios Mousouris, Assistant Secretary-General for the Centre Against Apartheid.

In a statement at the plenary meeting, Mrs. Ogata said the Secretary-General had expressed the hope that all parties would be able to participate in the deliberations of the Convention, so that its final outcome may be the fullest expression of the will of all the people of South Africa.

She said the United Nations would observe the deliberations and was ready to provide assistance in the ongoing process of transforming South Africa as and when requested by South Africans.

Speaking in her capacity as High Commissioner, Mrs. Ogata said that the agreement reached earlier this year between the South African Government and the UNCHR, after 501 days of difficult negotiations, had paved the way for the voluntary return of South African exiles and refugees. To date, some 420 South Africans had been repatriated and everything had been proceeding smoothly.

In a statement to the press, Nigerian Ambassador Gambari said the Special Committee against Apartheid was particularly gratified to witness the launching of a process for which it has campaigned for so long. He gave the full and concerted support to the critical process on behalf of the Committee.

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United Nations

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Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

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24 December 1991

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council calls for renewed efforts to solve Cyprus problem; Council President, in tribute to outgoing Secretary-General, underscores his role in positive transformation of United Nations.

- Secretary-General says charges against his Deputy Personal Representative for Western Sahara are "totally unfounded".

- Organization of African Unity appeals to Security Council to ensure that integrity of Peace Plan for Western Sahara is "safeguarded and its terms unaltered".

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The Security Council last night called on the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus, and of Greece and Turkey to cooperate fully in United Nations efforts to formulate an overall framework agreement aimed at solving the Cyprus problem.

In a statement read out by Council President Yuliy M. Vorontsov (Soviet Union), the Council members restated their position that the convening of a high-level international meeting chaired by the Secretary-General, in which the two communities of the island and Greece and Turkey would participate, represented an effective mechanism for concluding such an agreement.

The Council also expressed its appreciation to the Secretary-General "for his long and tireless efforts in seeking a just and lasting solution to the Cyprus question" and unanimously endorsed his recent report and observations on the matter.

In his report, the Secretary-General had expressed his disappointment that the Cyprus question, "with which I have been personally involved since 1975", had not yet been resolved. At the same time, he reiterated the conviction that the two communities "will inevitably recognize that a mutually acceptable solution is in their respective self-interest".

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After reading the agreed statement, the Council President paid tribute to outgoing Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. He said that Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, who served during a 10-year period of dramatic change in the international order, had done a great deal to help transform the United Nations from an organ of confrontation to one of cooperation.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuéllar said today through his Spokesman that he considered it "deeply offensive" that, before the Security Council's informal consultations yesterday on the question of Western Sahara, the representative of Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) had given wide distribution to a document containing unfounded and malicious allegations against his Deputy Special Representative for Western Sahara, Mr. Zia Rizvi.

The Secretary-General said it was not acceptable that such attempts should be made to discredit a trusted and long-serving member of the Secretariat who had been assisting him in carrying out the difficult mandate entrusted to him by the Security Council.

As regarded the allegations that Mr. Rizvi surreptitiously transmitted information provided by POLISARIO to the Government of Morocco, a recently concluded internal inquiry had established that no such information was transmitted, and that the allegations against Mr. Rizvi were totally unfounded.

In a separate development, it was announced that negotiations on El Salvador were being held at the Secretary-General's residence throughout the day.

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The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has said that "any change or modification to the elements" of the Peace Plan for Western Sahara, already accepted by the parties, would be "prejudicial to the process as well as to the organization of a free and fair referendum for self-determination" by the people of the Territory.

The statement was contained in a letter yesterday to the Security Council President, in the wake of a report by Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar on the situation in Western Sahara in which he proposed that the parties discuss new elements with respect to the identification of those eligible to vote in the future referendum. The Secretary-General had said that there existed some differences of interpretation of the settlement plan with respect to the confinements of troops and the return of refugees and other Saharans living outside the Territory. As was well known, he said, a number of people who claimed to belong to Western Sahara had been moved into the Territory.

In its letter to the Council, the OAU General Secretariat reaffirmed its commitment to observe the Western Sahara Peace Plan as accepted by the

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Government of Morocco and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO). But, at the same time, it appealed to Council members to ensure that the integrity of the Plan as accepted by the parties and endorsed by the international community was "safeguarded and its terms unaltered".

The letter was transmitted to the Council President by the Permanent Representative to the United Nations of Ghana, Chairman of the African Group, Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor.

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DH/1046
27 December 1991

F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- President of Russia informs United Nations that membership of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Security Council and other United Nations organs is being continued by Russian Federation.

- Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to leave New York for Yugoslavia tomorrow, 28 December; to meet with Lord Carrington and Foreign Ministers of Netherlands and Portugal in Lisbon on Monday.

- Secretary-General says he is "shocked and concerned" over situation in Somalia.

- Secretary-General expresses hope that German hostages will be released next week; negotiations on El Salvador to continue in New York.

- Morocco deplores document circulated at United Nations of behalf of African Group on the question of Western Sahara; says it is "a personal initiative" not authorized by African Group.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has been informed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin that the membership of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the United Nations, including the Security Council and all the other organs, is being continued by the Russian Federation (RSFSR) with the support of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Russian President further requested that the name "the Russian Federation" replace the name "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" in the United Nations. He said the Russian Federation maintained full responsibility for all the rights and obligations of the former Soviet Union under the United Nations Charter, including the financial obligations.

The statement was conveyed to the Secretary-General in a letter signed by President Yeltsin, dated 24 December.

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In a separate development, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said today that he was moved by President Mikhail Gorbachev's statement of resignation yesterday.

In a statement through his Spokesman the Secretary-General said that over the past six years, he had found in President Gorbachev a most staunch supporter of the United Nations and his own personal efforts for peace. He said President Gorbachev deserved great credit for policies that radically altered and improved the climate of international relations, adding that he had contributed considerably to the renaissance of the World Organization.

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The Secretary-General told the Security Council today, in a statement during informal consultations on the situation in Yugoslavia, that following a review of the situation with his successor, Boutros-Ghali, and his Personal Envoy, Mr. Cyrus Vance, he had requested Mr. Vance to undertake a fifth visit to Yugoslavia to see if the outstanding obstacles could be removed for the deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping operation in the country. Accordingly, he said, Mr. Vance would leave New York tomorrow, 28 December.

While en route to Yugoslavia, Mr. Vance would confer in Lisbon with the incoming President of the Council of Ministers of the European Community, the Foreign Minister of Portugal; the outgoing President, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands; and with Lord Carrington, Chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia.

In his statement to the Security Council, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said that both he and his successor attached great importance to the role of the European Community and especially to the Conference on Yugoslavia which, he said, "is the only forum in which all the Yugoslav Republics have agreed to participate in peacefully seeking a long-term solution to their differences".

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The Secretary-General told correspondents this morning that he was hopeful that the two German hostages still in captivity in Lebanon might be released next week.

In reply to questions upon entering the building, he said the case was complicated because of, what he called, "legal intricacies" in this exchange.

Asked by correspondents to reflect on what he considered his major successes during his ten-year tenure, the Secretary-General cited the independence of Namibia, the end of the Iran-Iraq conflict, United Nations cooperation for the end of Iraq-Kuwait war, Central America and the end to the hostage situation. He added that the release of the hostages was "not a political undertaking", but a humanitarian one.

In reply to a question concerning the current negotiation in New York on El Salvador, Mr. Pérez de Cuellar said he thought there was an "important movement ahead". With five days left, he hoped that important progress could

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be made before the end of the year. The talks between the Salvadorian Governments and the representatives of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) have been going on in New York since 16 December.

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The Secretary-General has appealed to those involved in the fighting in Somalia to provide all possible assistance to enable relief operations to reach people in need and to ensure the security and protection of international and local relief workers.

In a statement made through his Spokesman today, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said he had asked a small team of international staff, initially made up of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) members, to return to the capital city of Mogadishu immediately to work with other relief agencies currently there. He said contingency plans had been made to expand the relief operations with more food and other supplies to affected populations as soon as the security situation permitted.

In his statement, the Secretary-General said he wished to reiterate his profound shock and concern over the current situation in Mogadishu where exacerbated factional fighting had "engulfed the city in a nightmare of violence and brutality to civilians". Up to 20,000 people, the majority of whom were women and children, had been killed or injured since the heavy fighting resumed on 17 November. Many thousands were fleeing the city and large numbers of displaced people were without access to food, medical supplies, shelter or water.

He urged all parties to respect the key principle governing United Nations emergency relief assistance, namely that such assistance was purely humanitarian in nature and had no political implications. He emphasized that the sole aim of the operation was to provide urgent assistance to victims of the conflict wherever they may be.

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Morocco has deplored the circulation of a document of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) authorized by the rotating Chairman of the Group of African States at the United Nations on the situation in Western Sahara, saying it was a personal initiative and never authorized by the African Group.

The letter in question, signed by Ambassador Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor of Ghana on behalf of the African Group and the OAU, urges that the Peace Plan for Western Sahara remain unchanged.

The Secretary-General had earlier proposed that certain elements be taken up in order to straighten out differences in the interpretation of the Settlement Plan, including identification of those eligible to vote in the future referendum.

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Morrocco said the letter was merely a personal initiative which did not in any way commit the members of the African Group. The letter did not reflect the view of the current OAU President, and the African Group had not convened either to discuss the content of the statement or to determine the appropriateness of such action on its behalf.

Morocco said that the letter would only undermine the efforts currently being made by the Secretary-General to bring about a definitive settlement of the question of Western Sahara.

Morocco's protest was contained in a letter, dated 24 December, addressed to the President of the Security Council and signed by its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ahmed Snoussi.

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